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ART. IX.—*On the Saka, Samvat, and Gupta Eras. A Supplement to his Paper on Indian Chronology.* By JAMES FERGUSSON, D.C.L., F.R.S., *V.P.*R.A.S.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THE following notes on Indian Chronology were written in 1874, and were originally intended for the pages of the *Journal* of the Royal Asiatic Society. Before, however, they were printed off, I received a letter from Dr. Bühler, of Bombay, in answer to one I had written to him, on hearing a rumour that he had found Kanishka's name in one of the Puranas. I consequently refrained from publishing them, till it was known what bearing this discovery might have on the questions at issue. In order to ventilate the question, however, I had them printed, and in March, 1875, circulated them among my friends. As nothing has since been heard of Dr. Bühler's discovery, and recent excavations in Afghanistan throw new light on the question, I now submit them for republication where they were originally intended to appear.

During the eleven years that have elapsed since I read to the Society my paper on Indian Chronology,[1] some discoveries have been made and new facts brought to light, which have an important bearing on the subject. It seems it may now, consequently, be expedient to add a postscript or supplement to that paper, indicating how far they confirm or modify the views there put forward. I am the more induced

[1] Published in Vol. IV. N.S. of the Society's Journal, pp. 81–137. As that article contains all the references required, it will not be necessary to repeat them all here, but only such as have special reference to the new matter now brought forward.

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to attempt this, because I fancy that the mystery that has hung over the institution of the Eras of Vikramâditya and Sâlivahana can now be cleared up, though it has hitherto misled and puzzled all Indian archæologists since the days when Wilford wrote his celebrated article on the subject, in the ninth volume of the Asiatic Researches, published in 1807.

Of the new facts directly bearing on this subject, the most important is the discovery by Gen. Cunningham of a number of dated inscriptions, found at Mathura and in the Punjab, containing the name of the great Buddhist King Kanishka and those of his immediate successors.

These were first translated by Professor Dowson some time after my paper was read, and were published in the following volume of the Journal of this Society. They have since then been carefully revised by the General himself, and republished in the third volume of his Archæological Reports, pp. 29 et seqq. Their results have also been given to the world by Mr. Thomas, in his Essay on Ancient Indian Weights, forming the Introduction to Marsden, pp. 46 et seqq.

Practically, the result is the following list of Kings, copied from the last-named authority:

INDO-SCYTHIAN INSCRIPTIONS.

In the Indo-Páli Alphabet.

Mathurá.

KANISHKA. *Mahárája Kanishka. Samvat* 9.

HUVISHKA. *Mahárája* DEVAPUTRA *Huvishka. Samvat* 39.
Mahárája RÁJATIRÁJA DEVAPUTRA *Huvishka. Samvat* 47.
Mahárája Huvishka. Samvat 48.

VÁSUDEVA. *Mahárája Rájatirája* DEVAPUTRA *Vásu(deva). Samvat* 44.
Mahárája Vásudeva. Samvat 83.
Mahárája Rájatirája, SHÁHI, *Vásudeva. Samvat* 87.
Rája Vásudeva. Samvat 98.

In the Baktrian-Páli Alphabet.

Other localities.

Baháwalpúr. *Maharaja Rajadiraja* DEVAPUTRA *Kanishka.* Samvat 11, on the 28th of the (Greek) month of Dæsius.

Manikyála Tope. *Maharaja Kaneshka*, GUSHANA *vaṣa samvardhaka.* "Increaser of the dominion of the Gushans" (Kushans). *Samvat* 18.

Wardak Vase. *Maharaja rajatiraja Huveshka. Samvat* 51, 15th of Artemisius.

In addition to these Baktrian-Páli inscriptions, we have a record of a king called Moga (Moa ?), on a copper plate from Taxila, wherein the *Satrap Liako Kusuluḳo* (Kozola ?) speaks of the 78th year of the "great king, the great *Moga*," on the 5th of the month of Panæmus.

In addition to the inscriptions bearing these names, Gen. Cunningham quotes a great number of others, with dates in the same Samvat Era, extending from the year 5 to the year 281, but without any kings' names in them. Their purport, however, and the form of the characters used, he considers sufficient to show that they form a connected series dating from one and the same Era, whatever that may be.

Professor Dowson and General Cunningham unhesitatingly adopt the Samvat of Vikramâditya, B.C. 56, as the Era indicated in the inscriptions. Mr. Thomas does not say so expressly in the Introduction above referred to; but in a letter he wrote to the *Academy* in December, 1874, he places them, for reasons there given at length, as all anterior to the Saka Era, A.D. 79. My conviction, on the contrary, is that they all date from the last-named Era, which I believe was, in fact, established by King Kanishka, who himself was a Saka king. It took, apparently, the name by which it is generally known from the fact that it was introduced into India during the reign of Sâta Karni II. of the Andhra dynasty of the Dekhan, and who was consequently chief of the Sâtavahana[1] or Sâlivahana race. He reigned, as I showed in my last paper (p. 122), A.D. 64 to 120.

In the first place, what we know of Kanishka is that he was not only one of the greatest Kings of the north of India, but that he was one of the most zealous Buddhists. If he was not the introducer, he was certainly the establisher of that religion in the north. He held the third, or, as some call it, the fourth, Convocation of Buddhism, and, with the assistance of Nâgârjuna, spread that religion into Thibet and beyond the Himalayas. To assert that such a King as this would condescend to adopt an Era established by a Brahmanical King of Ujjain from which to date his edicts and inscriptions, is so utterly incredible that it would require the very strongest evidence to induce any one to adopt it. That George III. should have adopted the French Republican

[1] J.B.B.R.A.S. vol. ix. pp. 239, 240.

Saka Era.[1] Many more names have since been added, and to compress the whole within a century, which the Samvat theory involves, is so contrary to all experience, that, without some direct testimony in its favour, this view may safely be rejected.

In this maze of conjectures there is one fact we can rely upon. In a Tope which Kanishka built at Manikyala, he buried, along with many of his own, seven coins of the Roman Consular period.[2] These have been identified by Raoul Rochette and others, and it has been ascertained that they extend down to A.U.C. 711, or B.C. 43.[3] But these foreign coins are so worn with use as to be hardly distinguishable, while his own are fresh. Some considerable time must therefore have elapsed before they reached India in that condition. How long we must allow for this it is impossible to say; but this at least is certain, Kanishka was living and on the throne *after* B.C. 43. But in so far as this evidence goes, it is just as likely he may have been there 100 or 150 years after that time as 10 or 15 years.

No one has yet ventured to suggest any good reason why Kanishka should select seven wretched, worn silver Consular coins of Rome, to bury with his own gold pieces, when he could have selected hundreds of better examples from the Greek and Baktrian mintages at his command. It certainly was not their beauty, or value, nor their rarity, for at that time, after the defeat of Crassus, he might have got Roman coins by the bushel if he wanted them. They evidently had some sacred value independent of any numismatic considerations. They might have been the peculium of some Buddhist apostle who travelled in foreign parts—who went, perhaps, as far as Rome—or who acquired sufficient sanctity to be honoured by a Tope—but that could hardly have been within a century after his death. The case is different with the

[1] Thomas's list, published in his edition of Prinsep, vol. ii p. 178 et seqq., contains 38 names, of which probably 24 may be ascribed to the Græco-Baktrian Kingdom, the remaining 14 are Barbaric Kings; but how many more there may be we do not yet know.

[2] J.A.S B. vol. iii. p. 559, pl. xxxiv.

[3] Journal des Savans, 1836, p. 74; Thomas's Prinsep, vol. i. p. 148.

Roman gold coins recently found in Afghanistan; they are the best, and most valuable of the age to which they belong, and worthy of being associated, as they are found, with those of Kanishka. Be this, however, as it may, until it can be shown that these Consular denarii were placed in this Tope for some secular purpose, and not because they had become sacred from the use they had been put to, or from having belonged to some person who had become sacred, their value as an indication of the date of the Tope, or of its builder, is nil, and may safely be put on one side, for the present at least.

As hinted above, we find the name of Gondophares among the list of kings who reigned in the north-west of India, certainly subsequent to the fall of the Greek dynasties, and as certainly anterior to Kanishka.[1]

Now the name is familiar to us as that of a king to whom St. Thomas is said to have gone, and by whom, according to others, he was murdered. All that is related of his mission to India may probably be mere legendary fables, and which I certainly do not intend to attempt to investigate here. The one point that bears on our argument is that the legend —assuming it to be such—was probably invented in the second or third century after the Christian Era. The traditions are repeated as established facts by Eusebius[2] and Socrates in the fourth.[3] Whether true or not, it seems more than probable that those who related or invented these legends—probably in Babylonia at an early age—must have known who was the king reigning at Taxila at the time St. Thomas is supposed to have visited the East. That certainly was after A.D. 33, probably before A.D. 50.

The one point that interests us here is the inquiry whether those who wrote the history or invented the legend of St. Thomas, had the means of knowing what was the name of the king who ruled the north-west of India between these dates. For more reasons than it is worth while to adduce here, my conviction is, that ample means were available for

[1] Wilson's Ariana Antiqua, p. 340; Thomas's Prinsep, vol. ii. p. 214.
[2] Hist. Eccles. i. 13, iii.
[3] Hist. Eccles. i. 19.

this purpose; and, if this is so, it is inconceivable that they should have neglected them, and attached a wrong name to the legend. If this is so, it is almost impossible that Kanishka could have ascended the throne before A.D. 79, because, if this can be maintained, we have to find room for the whole Kadphises group of Kings between Gondophares and his accession. The difficulty is thus rather the other way, and certainly under no circumstances, if this view of the case be correct, could Kanishka have ascended the throne much before A.D. 79.

Quite recently, Mr. W. Simpson, in excavating the Ahin Posh Tope, near Jellalabad, found in the centre of it a relic chamber, in which were deposited eighteen gold coins lying loose, in excellent preservation; and two more in a small gold reliquary. Of these, ten belonged to Kadphises; six to Kanerki or Kanishka; one of them had an image of Buddha on the reverse, with his name in Greek characters; one was of Oerke or Huvishka, and three were Roman. Of these last one was of Domitian, another of Trajan, and the third of the Empress Sabina, the wife of Hadrian. The last-named, which is very much worn, proves that the Tope could not have been erected before 120 A.D. and may be as late as 140 or even 150.[1]

The first inference from this is, that it is, to say the least of it, most extremely improbable that the age of great Kanishka should be so distant from that of this Tope, as the Mathura inscription, above quoted, would make him, if the inscriptions were dated from the Vikramâditya Samvat. 9 and 18 from that Era would place him 47 and 38 B.C., and adding the age of the Tope, as ascertained from the coins, would make the interval 170 to 190 years, which is certainly too great. If, however, the inscriptions are dated from the Saka Era, these numbers would be 88 and 97 A.D., and allowing for the Huviska date, 47–48, equally 126–127 A.D. would accord perfectly with the date arrived at from the Roman coins—130 to 140 A.D.

[1] These particulars are taken from a paper by Dr. Hoernle, supplemented by one by General Cunningham, reported in the proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for March to August, 1879, p. 205, et seqq.

Another excavation, which has recently been made in the same neighbourhood, confirms this view in a most satisfactory manner. While Mr. Simpson was excavating the Ahin Posh Tope, Mr. Beglar was employed by General Cunningham to explore another at Ali Musjid. In this, I learn from a private letter from the General, he found three gold coins of BAZO AHO, or Vasudeva, to whose age he consequently ascribes its erection. Now if we assume that the Vasudeva inscriptions at Mathura are from the Vikramâditya Samvat, his dates 83 and 93 would correspond with 27 and 42 A.D., and if this was the case, it seems most strange that no coin of his was found in the Ahin Posh Tope. If, on the contrary, however, he used the Saka Era, these dates would be 162 and 177 A.D., which would at once account for their absence there, and give us a reasonable limit in the other direction for the date of that Tope.

At the time General Cunningham sent me this information, he sent me six photographs of the Ali Musjid Tope, and so far as I can form an opinion, from its architecture and the sculptures with which it is adorned, the difficulty is now all the other way. These represent the doctrines of an advanced Mahâyâna school, such as is not found in India in any case before the fourth or fifth centuries, and though it is probable that this form of Buddhism was introduced earlier in Gandhara than in India proper, the difficulty is to understand how this Ali Musjid Tope can be so early as even 177 A.D. If it were in India, any one who has studied the subject would certainly believe it was one or two centuries more modern.

Although these two discoveries of coins may not in themselves be sufficient to prove, absolutely, that all the Mathura dates are from the Saka Era, with the other evidence adduced, they make out so strong a case that it seems almost impossible to doubt its being so. If this is admitted, it follows as a matter of course that the Vikramâditya Samvat was not known till long after the age of the great King of Ujjain, in the sixth century, from whom its name was derived.

One other curious piece of evidence bearing on this subject

has recently been brought to light. In one of the inscriptions copied from the Badami caves by Mr. Burgess, and translated by Prof. Eggeling in the number for November, 1874, of the *Indian Antiquary*, the date is given in the following terms: "Sri Mangalîśvara, who in the 12th year of his reign—500 years having passed since the coronation of the King of the Sakas."[1] Here, therefore, in an inscription which is older than any manuscript we now possess, we have a distinct statement that it was not any defeat of the Sakas, but the inauguration of one of their Kings, that gave rise to the Era—and who was that King? I do not think any one at all familiar with the history of India about this Era would hesitate long in fixing on Kanishka, and with the evidence of his own dates, and that above adduced, the fact seems to me to be established almost beyond dispute; more particularly if it can be shown, as I hope to do presently, that the Vikramâditya Samvat was not invented till long after Kanishka's time.

Vikramâditya Samvat.

If the above reasoning is sufficient to make out even a *primâ facie* case in favour of the institution of the Saka Era by Kanishka, it only tends to make the origin of the Vikramâditya Samvat more and more mysterious. That a conqueror should seek to commemorate his accession to power by the institution of an Era, is an intelligible historical event; but there is in this case no hint of rival kings or rival eras, and nothing that has come to light since I last wrote on the subject now induces me to modify what I then said (pp. 131, 2). No authentic traces then existed of any King bearing the name or title of Vikramâditya having lived in the first century before Christ, and none have since been brought to light; nor has it been possible to point to any event as occurring B.C. 56 which was of sufficient importance to give rise to the institution of an era for its commemoration.

[1] Archæological Report on the Districts of Belgam and Kuladji, London, 1875, p. 24.

Finding no other plausible suggestion available in 1869, I was induced to adopt the theory proposed by Mr. Justice Newton, to the effect that the Era of 56 B.C. was instituted by Nahapana, the Viceroy of some foreign King called Kshaharátra,[1] who was all-powerful in the west some time not very distant from the Christian Era before or after. He, at all events, was the first of the line of Sah Kings, so called, of Guzerat, and it certainly is from his Era, or that of his master, that all their coins are dated. Further familiarity with the inscriptions and with the architecture of the western caves appears to me to have rendered this view untenable. The architectural evidence has been developed in my volume on Indian Architecture since published. The historical is mainly based on the celebrated Junaghur inscription of Rudra Dama, which is dated in the year 72 from the same Era from which all the coins of these kings are dated. In it he boasts "that, after twice conquering the Sâta Karni, Lord of Dakshinâpatha, he did not completely destroy him on account of their near connexion, and thus obtained glory." And he boasts of conquering, among other countries, Anupa, Sâurâshtra, Asva Kutcha, Kukura, Aparanta, etc.[2]

A little further on in our history, Gotamiputra, in whose reign the Era was established which was afterwards adopted by the Guptas and Ballabhis, boasts, in an inscription in a cave at Nassick, that he had conquered among others all the countries above enumerated, and as having re-established the glory of the Sâtavahana dynasty, and destroyed the race of Khagarata.[3] All this reveals a state of matters that will not accord with the Vikramâditya Era, but does perfectly agree with that of Sâlivahana.

Assuming that the Sâta Karni dynasty is correctly represented in the Puranas, as enumerated by me in my previous essay at p. 122, and which I see no reason for doubting, Rudra Dama would, on the assumption that the dates were Vikramâditya Samvat, have been reigning A.D. 16 (72—56),

[1] J.B.B.R.A.S. vol. v. p. 53.
[2] J.B.B.R.A.S. vol. viii. p. 119.
[3] J.B.B.R.A.S. vol. ix. p. 238. See also Bhandarkar, MS. translation.

immediately after the establishment of the dynasty, and before the long and prosperous reign of Sâta Karni II., which could hardly have taken place had his family been smitten so early in their career. But if we assume that it was in 151 A.D. (79+72), it would coincide with the reign of the third king of that name, and at a time when, so far as we can judge from the length of the reigns, and the careless way they are enumerated in the Puranas, the fortunes of the family were considerably depressed; and it is little more than a century and a half after this time that Gotamiputra restored the fortunes of his family. Had three hundred years elapsed between these two events, the family could never have attained the position it did.

Another point of more importance is that the dates on the Sah coins—from whatever era they are calculated—extend only to 270–71, or very doubtfully to 292.[1] If these are from the Vikramâditya Samvat, they must have ceased to reign in A.D. 214, or at the latest 236, and there would have been no Khagaratas for Gotamiputra to humble after 312. On the other hand, if calculated from A.D. 79, their final extinction would have been in 349, or at latest 371. So that, though humbled by Gotamiputra, they overlap the Gupta Era to some extent, which it seems is almost indispensable to account for the mode in which the Sah coins overlap and run into those of the Gupta series, on which Mr. Thomas so strongly, and, it appears to me, so correctly insists.[2]

This substitution of the Saka Era for the Samvat brings what we know of the history, with what we learn from the inscriptions, and gather from the coins, so completely into accordance, that I can hardly doubt now that it is the correct view of the matter, and certainly more in accordance with the facts than that I previously adopted.

Before leaving this branch of the subject, it may be as well to point out that the new Samvat or Era, A.D. 319, which was established in the reign of Gotamiputra, and from which the

[1] J.B.B.R.A.S. vol. viii. p. 28.

[2] Essay on the Sah Kings of Saurastra, J.R.A.S. Vol. XII. p. 16; and J.A.S.B. vol. xxiv. p. 503; see also Thomas's Prinsep, vol. ii. p. 95.

Guptas and Ballabhis afterwards dated their inscriptions, does not at all necessarily date from the accession of the king, nor his demise, nor from any event that took place during his reign. It seems simply to have been four cycles, of 60 years each, after Saka—$79+60\times4$. That the people who then ruled Western India were Yavanas, Sakas, Turushcas, and other tribes of Scythian origin, is abundantly clear from history, as well as from all the ethnological and religious data we can gather; and the cycle of 60 years is, and always was, the favourite and general mode of reckoning with them.[1] To enable the dates in the new era to be easily convertible into those of the old, it was necessary some even number should be adopted, and that is what was apparently done on this occasion.

If this last prop is knocked away, I am not aware of any direct evidence for the existence of a Vikramâditya Era in the first century B.C., nor for so long a time afterwards, so long indeed that it seems impossible to connect the two. Bhau Daji, for instance, says he knows of no inscription dated in this Samvat before the eleventh century of the Christian Era;[2] and, whatever may be said of his deficiencies in other branches of the subject, few men were so familiar with the data and more capable of giving an opinion on this subject. General Cunningham goes nearly as far. He says the Samvat of Vikramâditya was not used as early as 826;[3] though, somewhat inconsistently, he says in the same volume, that the earliest inscription he knows dated in the

[1] "Le mot *samvatsara* signifie *année;* c'est comme, si on disait révolutions annuelles. Ce samvatsara est fondé sur la marche de Jupiter et du Soleil. . . . Sa révolution est de soixante ans, voilà pourquoi on le nomme Schadabda (it should be Shashtyabda, from *Shashti* 'sixty,' and *Abda* 'year'), d'un mot qui signifie soixante ans." To this M. Reinaud adds in a note:—"Il me semble résulter de l'ensemble du passage que le cycle sexagesimal non seulement etoit propre à une certaine partie de l'Inde, mais qu'il étoit d'une institution récente. Le calcul présenté par Albyrouny me fait croire qu'il commenca seulement l'an 959 de notre ère. C'est en Chine que ce cycle a pris naissance; il y est d'un usage immemorial."—*Journal Asiatique*, series iv. vol. iv. pp. 281–2. In this conjecture M. Reinaud seems certainly to be mistaken. 959 may be the year of its application to the Samvat of Vikramâditya, as we hope to show presently; but it was applied to the Gupta Samvat in 319 A.D.

[2] J.B.B.R.A.S. vol. ix. p. 242.

[3] Archæological Reports, vol. ii. p. 266.

Vikramâ Era is 811 or A.D. 754.[1] As he does not say, however, what inscription he refers to, we may suspect his first assertion is the more correct one, till proof to the contrary is adduced. So far as I know, no inscription of so early a date has yet been published; and, if this is so, it is almost inconceivable that an era established before the birth of Christ could have lain so long dormant, and then have been so curiously revived, and so generally adopted.

Assuming, for the nonce, that what was said above is sufficient to explain, at least provisionally, the origin of the Saka Era, the solution of the difficulties regarding the rival Era will, I believe, be found in the correct interpretation of two passages in the Raja-Tarangini, combined with one in Albiruni.

The first in the Kashmir history, when narrating the events of the Aditya dynasty, which certainly did not commence before the middle of the fourth century, it is said, "Ayant fait venir ensuite, d'un autre pays, Pratâpâditya parent du roi Vicramâditya, ils le sacrèrent souverain de l'Empire.

"D'autres induites en erreur ont écrit que ce Vicramâditya fut le même que combattit les Çakas; mais cette version est rejetée."[2]

Some way further on, under the following dynasty, or that of the Gonerdya line restored, we have: "Dans le même temps — the death of Hiranya — l'heureux Vicramâditya, appelé d'une autre nom Harcha, réunit comme Empereur a Udjdjayinî l'empire de l'Inde sous un seul parasol. . . .

"Employant la fortune comme moyen d'utilité il fit fleurir les talents, c'est ainsi qu'encore aujourd'hui les hommes de talent se trouvent la tête haute au milieu des riches.

"Ayant d'abord détruit les Çakas, il rendit léger le fardeau

[1] Arch. Reports, vol. ii. p. 68.

[2] Troyer's translation of the Raja Tarangini, vol. ii. p. 43. In Wilson's translation it is said, "A different monarch from the Saccâri Vicramâditya, though sometimes erroneously identified with that prince."—Asiatic Researches, vol. xv. p. 32.

de l'œuvre de Hari, qui doit descendre sur la terre pour exterminer les Mlêtchhas."[1]

Before going further, it may be as well to point out what appears to be a fair inference from the above. That the first Vikramâditya, the friend of Pratâpâditya, was so near in date the second—he, in fact, appears to have been his grandfather—as to be confounded with him, and to have the name of Sakari applied to him, which in fact belonged to his grandson, the real destroyer of the Sakas.

The passage in Albiruni is to the following effect: "L'ère de Saca, nommée par les Indiens Sacakâla, est postérieure à celle de Vicramâditya de 135 ans. Saca est le nom d'un prince qui a régné sur les contrées situées entre l'Indus et la mer (le Golf du Bengale). Sa résidence était placée au centre de l'Empire (Muttra?), dans la contrée nommée Aryavartha. Les Indiens le font naître dans une classe autre que celle des (Kchatrias?) quelques-uns prétendent qu'il était Soudra et originaire de la ville de Mansoura. Il y en a même qui disent qu'il n'était pas de race Indienne, et qu'il tirait son origine des régions occidentales. Les peuples eurent beaucoup à souffrir de son despotisme, jusqu'à ce qu'il leur vînt du secours de l'Orient. Vicramâditya marcha contre lui, mit son armée en déroute, et le tua sur le territoire de Korour, situé entre Moultan et le Château de Louny. Cette époque devint célèbre, à cause de la joie, que les peuples ressentirent de la mort de Saca, et on la choisit pour ère, principalement chez les astronomes."[2]

He then goes on to point out that, because of the distance of time between the Saka and Samvat Eras (135 years), this could not be the celebrated Vikramâditya, and, according to the system in vogue in his time, it was of course impossible to reconcile the date with the facts. I do not, think, however, that any one who is even moderately acquainted with the

[1] *Loc. cit.* p. 76.

[2] Reinaud. Extraits d'Albiruni, Journal Asiatique, 4th série, tom. iv. p. 282. The principal passages bearing on the subject have already been printed in this Journal by Mr. Thomas, Vol. XII. pp. 14 and 44; so that it will not be necessary to repeat them here: but the whole chapter ought to be read by every one who wishes to understand how confused and artificial the whole system of eras was among the Hindus in Albiruni's time.

mediæval history of India, and the part the Sakas played after the time of the Andhras,[1] can doubt that these two accounts refer to the same events. The first question, therefore, is to ascertain their real date, the second to find out when and why it was altered.

In my previous essay (p. 100) I set down the date of Vikramâditya's death as occurring A.D. 530. To this I shall return presently; but, meanwhile, in order to make clear what follows, it may be expedient to assume that this was erroneous to the extent of, say 20 years, and that that event took place A.D. 550, or thereabouts. The battle of Korûr and the extermination of the Sakas may, therefore, have occurred 544, when Sri Harsha Vikramâditya was in the plenitude of his power, as evidenced by his having in that year established his servant Matri Gupta on the throne of Kashmir.

Assuming this for the nonce, what appears to have happened is this. About or before the year A.D. 1000 the struggle with the Buddhists was over, and a new era was opening for the Hindu religion, and a revival among the Hindu dynasties;[2] and it was then determined to reform the Calendar in a sense favourable to the new state of affairs. The Era then most in use was that of Saka, established, as I believe, by the Buddhist Kanishka, and certainly generally used by Buddhists in all their inscriptions. It was consequently deemed necessary to institute some new era to supersede it. That of 319 had also been employed by Buddhists, but the Guptas had at that time passed away, and so had the Ballabhis, and both were insignificant and of doubtful orthodoxy. Their Era would not therefore suit. The old Eras—the Kali Yug, Mahabharata, etc.—as Albiruni says, involved such lengthened periods, "qu'on avait renoncé à en faire usage."[3] In consequence of this, in looking back through their history for some name worthy to dignify the Era, and some event of sufficient importance to

[1] Wilson's translation of Vishnu Purana, p. 477.
[2] See Walter Elliot, J.R.A.S. Vol. IV. p. 10 *et seqq.*
[3] Journal Asiatique, *loc. cit.* p. 280.

mark its commencement, they hit on the name of Vikramâditya as the most illustrious known, and his victory of Korûr as the most important event of his reign.

The date, however, of that battle (A.D. 544) was too recent for their purpose. There were numberless events anterior to that time, which had not been forgotten, and required to be dated, and if they adopted it literally, they must have counted backwards from it, as well as forwards, as we do from the Christian Era; and no chronologer in his senses would do this if he could help it.[1] They consequently established two new Eras. First by adding 10 cycles of 60, or 600 years to the date of 544, establishing one dignified by the name of Vikramâditya 56 years B.C. They then introduced another 10 centuries, or 1000 years, before the same date, or 456 B.C., and called it that of Harsha, from the other half of his name. The latter never came much into use, and we only know of its existence from Albiruni. The former eventually superseded all others in Hindu chronology.

The following two passages extracted from Albiruni's celebrated work are sufficient to show how absolute the confusion was in the Hindu mind with regard to eras and epochal dates, at the time he wrote (A.D. 1032). He does not profess to understand them himself, and it is consequently only from extraneous information that we can now make anything of them; but properly used they do seem to throw very considerable light on several vexed questions of Indian chronology. The first is as follows:

"On emploi ordinairement les ères de Sri Harscha, de Vicramaditya, de Saca, de Ballabha, et des Gouptas."—p. 280.

"D'après cela en s'en tenant a l'an 400 de l'an de Yezderdjed, on se trouve sous l'année 1488 de l'ère de Sri Harscha—l'an 1088 de l'ère de Vicramaditya—l'an 953 de l'ère de Saca—

[1] In order to illustrate what is meant by this, I may mention that when investigating chronological questions, before writing my work on the "True Principles of Beauty in Art," I found the inconvenience so great, that I was induced to propose the introduction of a Decimal Era, 10,000 years B.C. The first year of Christ was consequently 10,001. The present year 11,880. In other words, by adding one digit to the left, the whole was reduced to a consecutive series from before the oldest date known to the present date. A simplification, the advantage of which it is not easy to overestimate.

l'an 712 de l'ère de Ballabha, et de celle des Gouptas."—*Journal Asiatique*, series iv. vol. iv. p. 286.

Then follows:

"Déjà je me suis excusé sur l'imperfection de ce qui est dit ici et j'ai averti que les resultats que je présente offrait quelque incertitude, vu les nombres qui excèdent celui de cent. Je ferai remarquer de plus que j'ai vu les Indiens lorsqu'ils veulent remarquer la prise de Soumenat (par Mahmoud le Ghaznévide) évènement qui en lieu l'an 416 de l'hégire (Janvier, 1026 de J.C.) et l'an 947 de l'ère de Saca. Je les ai vus ecrire 242 puis au dessous 606 puis encore 99 enfin additioner le tout ensemble; ce qui donne l'ère de Saca. On peut enduire de là, que le nombre 242 indique les années qui précèdent l'epoque ou les Indiens commencerent à se servir, d'un cycle de cent et que cet usage commença avec l'ère des Gouptas. D'après cela le nombre 606 indiquerait les Samvatsaras de cent complets, ce qui porterait chaque Samvatsara à 101. Quant au nombre 99 ce seraient les années qui ne sont ecoulées du Samvatsara non encore révolu."—*Journal Asiatique*, 4 serie, tom. iv.

In all this mass of confusion there seem to be only two facts that come out with any clearness. The first, as mentioned above, is that the 240 years, or with the Lokakala 242—was 4 cycles of 60 years added arbitrarily to the Saka Era without any special reference to any historical event, by a Scythic or Turanian people who were in the habit of using that cycle, and thus most appropriate to the Buddhists. The 600 years, or 606 with the Lokakala, was a most ingenious invention of the Aryan Brahmans in order to combine their own cycle of 100 years with the Buddhist cycle of sixty, and the only question is, when it was invented, and when it commenced. It could hardly have been from 319, as Albiruni seems to have supposed, for, if General Cunningham is correct, we have dates in this Samvat before 919, or with the Lokakala 927, which, according to this theory, would be the earliest possible date for its establishment (319+600=919). Besides, there seems no reason for supposing that the Brahmans ever adopted the Saka Era or its sub-

ordinate Gupta Samvat to date from. It is very much more probable that they would employ the 600 years in fixing an era 135 years earlier than the Buddhist Saka, and 600 years before the most notable event in the reign of the great Vikramâditya—the Battle of Korûr, which happened in 544 A.D. This probability arises almost to a certainty, when we find the Brahmans employing ten of their own cycles of 100 years each, to found a second era 1000 years before the same date of 544, or in 456 B.C., and calling it also by the first part of the name of that king or Srî Harsha.

No one pretends that any such era existed in the fifth century B.C., and the fact that one of these two eras was exactly 600 years, and the other one exactly 1000 years, before 544 A.D.; and that both were called by the names of the great king of Ujjain; are coincidences so remarkable that it seems impossible to account for them, except in some such manner as I have suggested.

The advantage gained by fixing on an earlier date than any of the eras currently in use, was evident enough. By simply adding 135 to any Saka date, the corresponding Samvat date could be obtained; and by the reverse process of deducting 135 years, Samvat dates could be converted into those of Saka. So, too, by adding or subtracting 375, Gupta or Ballabhi dates could be converted into those of the new era. Had the new starting-point been subsequent to either of these then fashionable eras, a complication would have been introduced which would have been most perplexing.

If the celebrated Bhoja of Dhar, who is said to have ascended the throne about A.D. 1035,[1] had been a little earlier, I would have been inclined to ascribe the introduction of the new era to him. He is fabled to have found and dug up the celebrated but long-buried throne of the great Vikramâditya,[2] which I cannot but consider as a metaphorical allusion to some such event; and he was certainly one of the most prominent characters in this eleventh century revival. But I fear his date is too near the time when Albiruni was

[1] Tod's Annals of Rajasthan, vol. i. p. 800.
[2] Asiatic Researches, vol. ix. p. 177; Journ. Asiatique, 1844, p. 250.

writing his book, for our purposes, and that we must look for some earlier king as the originator of the new system.

In so far as the main argument is concerned, it is of comparatively little consequence by whom, or at what time this new era was instituted; meanwhile, however, we get a hint of what was going on from Sir Walter Elliot's paper in our 4th vol. (p. 14). In Saka 998, A.D. 1076, "Kali Vikram, with the title of Tribuvana Malla, usurped the kingdom. Having set aside the ancient Saka, he established the Vikram Saka in his own name." In another inscription he is described "as rubbing out the Saka and instituting the Vikram Era in its stead;" and this seems at that time to have been going on everywhere. It may, however, have been changed earlier by others, but it certainly was about this time that the permanent change was effected.

The most tangible objection to this view of the matter—but it is much less serious than it at first sight appears—is the difficulty of reconciling the date of the Battle of Korûr (544) with what we know is Vikramâditya's date. In my previous paper it was fixed, principally on two statements of Hiouen-Thsang. Speaking in 640, he says: "Suivant la tradition, le trône était occupé, il y a soixante ans, par un roi nommé Siladitya." And on the next page he speaks of the "cinquante ans qu'il resta sur le trône."[1] He was the son of the celebrated Vikramâditya, and, according to this account, 90 years elapsed between his accession to the throne and the time when the pilgrim was noting the events. The time is long, and Hiouen-Thsang is generally so careless about his dates, that we might, if necessary, cut 20 years off this period, were it not that the Hindus under the name of Chandra Sena give him exactly the same length of years,[2] and place his father's death—though it may be only an accidental coincidence—in 541.[3] For these and other reasons assigned in my previous paper, I would willingly let the date remain

[1] Vie de Hiouen-Thsang, vol. i. pp. 204-5.

[2] He is called Boja by Ferishtah and other Persian historians, who assign to him the same length of reign, 50 years.—Dow's translation, vol. i. p. 13.

[3] Asiatic Researches, vol. ix. p. 175.

as I then placed it, till the necessity for its readjustment is more clearly shown than it is at present.[1]

Even if we adopted this summary process with regard to Hiouen-Thsang, the synchronism with the Kashmir dynasties would present difficulties not easily overcome. Of course, by allowing the Kings of the Gonerdiya dynasty, from Meghavahana to Matrigupta, the full length of reigns assigned to them, and shortening those that come after, to the accession of Durlabhaverddhana,[2] to a proportional extent, a synchronism might be established, even if the twenty years were retrenched, and it is possible this might represent the facts, though it looks improbable. On the whole, I prefer assuming that those who set to work to adjust the chronology in the tenth or eleventh century did not know the date of the Battle of Korûr within 20 years, and placed it in 544, instead of 524, which appears to be the true date.[3]

In whatever manner this little discrepancy of 20 years may be accounted for, the great fact still remains, that Srî Harsha Vikramâditya Sakari lived and defeated the Sakas at the Battle of Korûr, in the first half of the sixth century of our Era; and the Hindus, for the sake of adjusting their Eras, placed these events in the first century before Christ. This is all I care to contend for at present; for, if it is admitted, it gets rid of an immense mass of rubbish which has perplexed every inquirer, from the time when Wilford wrote his celebrated essay on the same subject, to the present day. So long as such a monstrous perversion of truth remains unex-

[1] The Ayeen Akbary, vol. ii. p. 49, places Bhowj's accession 485 A.D. or 541–56. Bhoja is the name the Persians give to Vikramâditya's son, and often confound the acts of the one with those of the other.—Ferishtah, Dow's translation, vol. i. p. 13.

[2] A.D. 627, instead of 645, as stated in my former paper. For this correction I am indebted to Gen. Cunningham's Geography of Ancient India, p. 91.

[3] In order to illustrate how this might happen, let us suppose the non-Christian inhabitants of this island, in the time of King Arthur, had wished to establish an Era of their own, independently of the Christian Era. If the Pagan Danes had conquered and been unconverted, they certainly would have made the attempt. Supposing they had selected the Departure of the Romans, the Battle of Badon Hill, or any great national event, at about that distance of time, to start from, —could they have fixed it certainly within 20 years? I fancy not; and having the Christian Era to guide them, they ought to have done it much more easily than the Indians, who were always careless and uncritical as to dates or Eras.

posed, Hindu Chronology is impossible; if it is abolished, there is very little difficulty remaining.

One of the first effects of this clearance of the way, will be that a number of small problems that puzzled Albiruni and other chronologers will become easily explicable. Take, for instance, the Loka Kala. This is described by Albiruni as a mode of reckoning among the vulgar, "comput du vulgaire," as distinguished from that of educated people, and consisted in adding one to the hundreds, as Easterns generally do to thousands, in order to prevent the last figure being altered, —as in the famous instance of the 1001 nights of Arabia— and in this instance stopping the calculation at 101,[1] as if the common people did not require to look beyond that. The confusion it introduced is easily understood, and shows how careless and unscientific the Indians were in these matters. He quotes two instances: one, the distance between the Saka Era and that of the Guptas, which we know was 240, 60×4, neither more nor less; but according to this absurd mode of calculation is made 242. The other instance is an epoch of 600 years, which Albiruni does not know where to apply, but is evidently the 60×10 which was used to adjust the Vikramâditya Samvat to the date of the Battle of Korûr, but is here called 606, and fits to nothing. His quoting these two illustrations, however, is a satisfactory confirmation of what has been above advanced. They are just the two figures required to prove the correctness of the theory here advocated.

It is the same, I believe, with half the figures scattered through the pages of Wilford. They may all be true figures, but in nine cases out of ten misapplied or misunderstood; but, if any one would take the pains now to readjust them, I hardly doubt but that their true application and meaning could be found out. But that, I am certainly not going to attempt here, though I wish to point it out as a source of information available for others.

The truth of the matter appears to be, Albiruni, like Wilford, collected together a vast mass of facts and dates connected with Indian Chronology; but neither of them had

[1] Journal Asiatique, series iv. vol. iv. pp. 287–289.

any such knowledge of the real history of the country as would enable them to ascertain their real value or sequence. We have now access to Wilford's authorities, and can judge how far he was right or wrong. But Albiruni, apparently, had access to documents now lost; and his work, when published in extenso, may afford us much additional information; but so far as I can judge from what has been already published, there is not one single fact that can be accepted at once, without careful examination, nor is there one that is of much value, unless supported by corroborative evidence.

Gupta Kala.

There is one other point of some, though not very great, importance, which information obtained since 1869 has set at rest. When writing that essay, I was obliged to leave it undetermined (pp. 103, 107) whether the two inscriptions of 82 and 93 of the Gupta Kala belonged to the first or second Chandra Gupta. A paper written by Major Watson, and published in the *Indian Antiquary* for November, 1873, clears up that difficulty. We there learn that Chandra Gupta II. reigned 23 years after the conquest of Saurâshtra by his son; that Kumara Pal Gupta reigned 20 years; and that Skanda Gupta succeeded him, but lost Saurâshtra by the rebellion of his Senâpati Bhattaraka, the founder of the Ballabhi family. Two years after this event Skanda Gupta died, and, as we are informed, "at this time the Gupta race were dethroned by foreign invaders."[1] From this it appears, undoubtedly, that the second arrangement I then proposed is the correct one, and that the above dates belong to Chandra Gupta II.; all those of the later kings are consequently now known within a year or two.

The Era from which these dates are taken never appeared to me doubtful; and this confirms me more and more in the conviction that it was from the Era that bears their name, A.D. 319. It could not be from the Saka Era, as has generally

[1] Indian Antiquary, vol. ii. p. 312.

been assumed, from the fact that Albiruni asserts that the Era that bears their name was "apparently" that of their destruction,[1] because in that case Skanda Gupta must have lived and reigned for 94 years in addition to the 16 we already know, from inscriptions, he occupied the throne. A reign of 110 years seems impossible; and, if it is not so, it seems certain, for the reasons stated in my previous paper, that the Gupta Era, 319, is that from which their coins and inscriptions are dated.

Besides this, the 146[2] years from 319, which we know from their dated inscriptions that they reigned, is just the interval that is required to fill up the gap between the Ballabhis and their Era which they adopted on usurping the inheritance of the Guptas, two years before Skanda Gupta's death.[3]

One other point of considerable importance to Indian history which arises from the fixation of this date (A.D. 465–70) for the destruction of the Guptas is, that it was almost certainly the White Huns who were the "foreign invaders" that struck the blow that stopped their career. At least, we learn from Cosmas Indicopleustes, writing 70 years after this time, that the Huns were a powerful nation in the north of India in his day, and, we may infer from what he says of them, had been settled there some time.[4]

On the Bhitari Lât, Bhau Daji reads—somewhat doubtfully, it must be confessed—the fact that Skanda Gupta had fought, apparently with success, against the Hunas.[5] But the great point is that it was just about this time that the White Huns broke loose and extended their incursions east and west, so that there is not only no improbability of their being the "foreign invaders" alluded to, but every likelihood they were so. No one, indeed, can, I believe, with the knowledge we now possess, read De Guignes' chapter on the White

1 Journal Asiatique, series iv. vol. iv. p. 285.
2 This date is from an unpublished copper-plate grant, in the possession of Gen. Cunningham, and is in addition to the three others of the same reign quoted in my previous paper, p. 112.
3 Indian Antiquary, vol. ii. p. 312; see also vol. iii. p. 344.
4 Topographia Christiana, lib. xi. p. 338, edit. Paris, 1707.
5 J.B.B.R.A.S. vol. x. p. 60.

Huns,[1] without perceiving that it contains the key to the solution of many mysterious passages in Indian history. It is true India is not mentioned there; but from the time of Bahram Gaur in 420, till the defeat of Firoze in 475, the Persians were waging an internecine war with these Huns, and nothing can be more likely than that the varying fortunes of that struggle should force them to seek the alliance of the then powerful Guptas, to assist them against their common foe.

Precisely the same impression is conveyed by what is said by Ferishtah and the Persian historians[2] of the history of that time. Nothing can now, however, be more easily intelligible than the visit of Bahram Gaur to India when first attacked by the White Huns. His marriage with an Indian (? Gupta) Princess of Canouge; the tribute or assistance claimed by Firoze and his successors on the Persian throne, are all easily explicable, on the assumption that the two nations were at that time engaged in a struggle against a common enemy. This, too, explains the mention of the "Shah in Shahi" on Kumara Gupta's Allahabad inscription.[3] Hence, too, the decided Persian influence on the gold coinage of the Canouge Guptas,[4] and the innumerable Sassanian coins of that period found in all parts of the north of India.[5] In all this the Sassanians seem inseparably mixed with the Guptas. The Persians, however, came eventually victorious out of the war. The great Guptas were struck down at some date between 465–70, or very shortly afterwards. The struggle, however, was apparently continued for some time longer by a subordinate branch of their successors; inasmuch as we learn from an inscription found at Aphsar in Behar,[6] that the fourth of

[1] Vol. i. part ii. lib. iv. pp. 325 *et seqq.*

[2] Malcolm's Persia, vol. i. p. 118; Briggs's translation of Ferishtah, intro. lxxvii. *et seqq.*; Dow's translation, p. 13.

[3] Journal Asiatic Soc. Bengal, vol. vi. 1837, p. 963; also Thomas's Prinsep, vol. i. p. 234.

[4] Journal Asiatic Soc. Bengal, vol. v. plates xxxvi. and xxxvii.; also Thomas's Prinsep, vol. i. p. 277, plate xxiii.

[5] Thomas's Prinsep, vol. i. p. 407, *et passim.*

[6] Journal Asiatic Soc. Bengal, 1866, p. 273. See also Cunningham's Archæological Reports, vol. iii. p. 136.

that dynasty, Damodara Gupta, "successfully encountered, at the Battle of Maushari, the fierce army of the Western Hunas." This event may have stopped the career of the Huns in India, in which case it could not well have taken place before the year 535, when Cosmas Indicopleustes is supposed to have written his Topographia Christiana; but it is by no means clear that he was not describing events that took place when he was himself in India some time previously. But be this as it may, it brings us back to the time when the Battles of Korûr and Maushari freed India from the Sakas and Hunas, who had long held her in hated subjection. That these two battles were fought between 524 and 544 appears to me hardly doubtful; and they thus fix one of the most important epochs in Mediæval Indian history. Indeed, so near each other are these two events in date, that I sometimes feel almost inclined to fancy they may be only different names for the same battle. At all events, they almost certainly represent parts of the same campaign which freed India in that age from the Yavanas; and that it was to commemorate the glories of these struggles that the Vikramâditya Samvat was afterwards instituted. This expulsion of the Yavanas was, too, the first serious blow that was struck at Buddhist supremacy, and from the effects of which it never afterwards completely recovered.

To make all this as clear to others as it is to myself, would require much more careful and elaborate working out than can be attempted in this place. But I feel convinced that if any one who had access to the same sources of information as De Guignes and Ferishtah, would re-write this chapter with special reference to India, availing himself of all the recent sources of information in that country, and combining it with what we learn from the Byzantine historians, he could easily restore to history one of the most interesting, and at the same time one of the most romantic, chapters in the history of India.

Nothing but a mistaken system of Chronology could have prevented all this being seen long ago, and now that these difficulties are being cleared away, we may hope that before

long this part of Indian history will be placed on a satisfactory basis.

My impression is, that this view of the Gupta Era would never have been considered doubtful, had it not been that the Chronology of that period has hitherto been based almost exclusively on Numismatic researches; and as it happens that the Andhras, or Sâtavahanas, being a native race, hardly coined money at all, they have been overlooked and their places filled by others. The wealth of ancient coins we find in India belongs almost exclusively to intruding foreigners, who came from or through Baktria, where they learnt the art of coining from the Greeks or their successors; and it was only at the time of the Guptas themselves that the indigenous races took extensively to coining, and the use of money. If the Andhras, however, did not coin money, they did better. They dug caves in the rocks, and covered them with inscriptions; and when these are read and their surroundings studied, they may regain their place in Indian history with a certainty that cannot be disturbed. The dates, however, of the Andhras or Andhrabhrityas, as they are usually called, are the only ones regarding which any uncertainty at present prevails, and till these inscriptions are more carefully examined than hitherto has been the case, they cannot be regarded with the same confidence as others referred to in the preceding pages.

ART. X.—*The Megha-Sūtra.* By CECIL BENDALL, Fellow of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge.

THE following article was originally suggested by a notice in Beal's[1] "Catena of Buddhist Scriptures from the Chinese." The sūtra is there selected as a type of the latest phase of Buddhist literature, not only on account of its own peculiarities, but owing to its religious importance among the Chinese, which caused the imperial rescript for its translation and general promulgation, of which an English version is there given. The two parts of which this sūtra is composed are mentioned as Nos. 15 and 16 of vol. 14 of the Tibetan "Gyut," by Csoma Körösi in As. Res. xx. p. 529; the names of the translators fix its date as earlier than the ninth century. Finding that the Sanskrit original existed in the great, and hitherto unworked, mine of Northern Buddhist literature, the Wright Collection of Nepalese Sanskrit MSS. in the University Library of Cambridge, it was suggested to me by Prof. Cowell, to whose assistance I have been throughout deeply indebted, that it might prove generally interesting if an edition of the sūtra were prepared. A perusal, however, of the work showed such a preponderance of the objectionable peculiarities of this branch of Tantric literature, endless repetitions of words and thought, huge and meaningless congestions of epithets and titles, vast catalogues[2] of names, and in fact such an entire absence of literary merit of any kind, that the project of preparing a complete edition was abandoned, and the following annotated abridgment drawn

[1] See also Fergusson, "Tree and Snake Worship," p. 55, where some further account of the Chinese version is given, and one of its illustrations reproduced; the observations as to the date may be corrected, however, by a reference to Csoma (as presently quoted).

[2] *e.g.* the list of 177 snakes at the beginning.

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